

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of the claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

**1-3. (Canceled)**

**4. (Previously Presented)** The method according to claim 31, wherein the resulting microparticles have an average particle diameter of 0.01  $\mu\text{m}$  to 150  $\mu\text{m}$ .

**5. (Previously Presented)** The method according to claim 31, wherein the resulting microparticle is a drug carrier.

**6. (Previously Presented)** The method according to claim 31, wherein the resulting microparticle is a sustained-release drug carrier.

**7. (Currently Amended)** The method according to claim 31, wherein the dilute solution before the crosslinking reaction contains a drug, and the drug is held in the microparticles obtained after the crosslinking reaction.

**8. (Original)** The method according to claim 7, wherein the crosslinking reaction does not cause drug denaturation even in the presence of the drug.

**9-10. (Canceled)**

**11. (Withdrawn)** The method according to claim 1, wherein the crosslinking reaction is a reaction in which

crosslinkages are formed by reaction between hydrazide group and an activated carboxylic acid ester.

**12-19. (Canceled)**

**20. (Withdrawn)** The microparticle according to claim 31, wherein the crosslinkable functional group is a mercapto group, and the crosslinking reaction is a reaction in which crosslinkages are formed by disulfide formation.

**21. (Canceled)**

**22. (Withdrawn)** The microparticle according to claim 31, wherein the crosslinking reaction is a reaction in which crosslinkages are formed by reaction between a hydrazide group and an activated carboxylic acid ester.

**23. (Canceled)**

**24. (Previously Presented)** The method according to claim 4, wherein the resulting microparticle is a drug carrier.

**25. (Previously Presented)** The method according to claim 24, wherein the resulting microparticle is a sustained-release drug carrier.

**26. (Previously Presented)** the method according to claim 25, wherein the dilute solution before the crosslinking reaction contains a drug, and the drug is held in the microparticles obtained after the crosslinking reaction.

**27. (Previously Presented)** The method according to claim 26, wherein the crosslinking reaction does not cause drug denaturation even in the presence of the drug.

**28-30. (Canceled)**

**31. (Currently Amended)** A method for preparing crosslinked polysaccharide microparticles, which comprises the following steps:

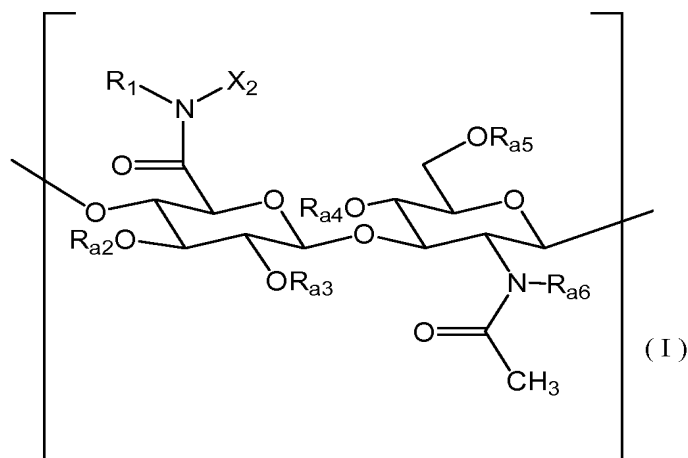
a) preparing a dilute solution containing (1) a polysaccharide derivative having at least one crosslinkable functional group in a range of 0.1 to 5% (w/v) and (2) a crosslinking agent;

b) dispersing the solution by spraying to form microparticulate droplets; and

c) concentrating the solution contained in the droplets to facilitate a crosslinking addition reaction of the polysaccharide derivative between a mercapto group and an unsaturated C-C bond;

wherein steps b) and c) are carried out in a spray drying procedure;

wherein the polysaccharide derivative is a hyaluronic acid derivative comprising at least one repeating unit represented by Formula (I);



wherein  $X_2$  represents  $-Y_1-Q_1-Y_2-N(-R_2)-Y_3-Q_2-SH$ ,  $-N(-R_2)-Y_3-Q_2-SH$ ,  $-NHCO-(CH_2)_4-CONH-NH-C(=NH)-(CH_2)_3-SH$ ,  $-(CH_2)_2-NH-C(=NH)-(CH_2)_3-SH$ , or  $-(CH_2)_2-O-(CH_2)_2-O-(CH_2)_2-NH-C(=NH)-(CH_2)_3-SH$ ,

$R_1$  represents a hydrogen atom, a linear or branched  $C_{1-10}$  alkyl group, a linear or branched  $C_{1-10}$  hydroxyalkyl group, a polyalkylene oxide group, a polypeptide group or a polyester group,

$R_{a2}$ ,  $R_{a3}$ ,  $R_{a4}$ ,  $R_{a5}$  and  $R_{a6}$  each independently represent a hydrogen atom, a linear or branched  $C_{1-6}$  alkyl group, a linear or branched  $C_{2-6}$  alkenyl group, a linear or branched  $C_{2-6}$  alkynyl group, a linear or branched  $C_{1-16}$  alkylcarbonyl group, a linear or branched  $C_{2-6}$  alkenylcarbonyl group, a linear or branched  $C_{2-6}$  alkynylcarbonyl group or  $-SO_2OH$ ,

$Y_1$  represents a single bond,  $-N(-R_3)CO-$ ,  $-N(-R_3)-$ ,  $-CO-$  or  $-CH_2CO-$ ,

$Y_2$  represents a single bond,  $-\text{CON}(-R_4)-$  or  $-\text{N}(-R_4)-$ ,

$Q_1$  represents a linear or branched  $C_{1-10}$  alkylene group, a linear or branched  $C_{1-10}$  hydroxyalkylene group, a polyalkylene oxide group, a polypeptide group or a polyester group,

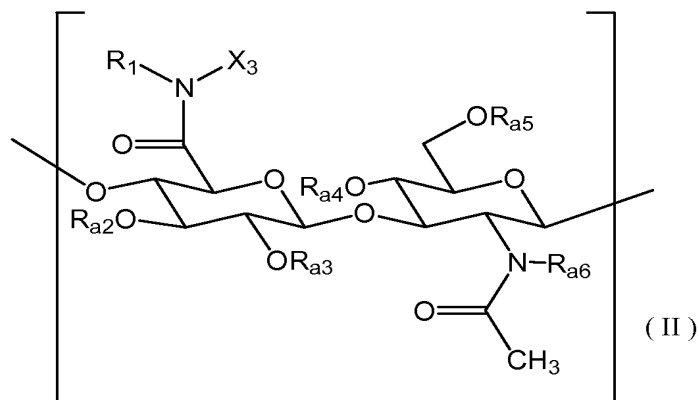
$R_2$ ,  $R_3$  and  $R_4$  each independently represent a hydrogen atom, a linear or branched  $C_{1-10}$  alkyl group, a linear or branched  $C_{1-10}$  hydroxyalkyl group, a polyalkylene oxide group, a polypeptide group or a polyester group,

$Y_3$  represents a single bond,  $-\text{CO}-$ ,  $-\text{CO}_2-$ ,  $-\text{CH}_2-\text{CH}(\text{OH})-$  or  $-\text{CONH}-$ , and

$Q_2$  represents a linear or branched  $C_{1-10}$  alkylene group, a linear or branched  $C_{1-10}$  hydroxyalkylene group, a polyalkylene oxide group, a polypeptide group or a polyester group,

and the crosslinking agent is a compound having two or more unsaturated C-C bond-containing groups; or

the polysaccharide derivative is a hyaluronic acid derivative comprising at least one repeating unit represent by Formula (II):



wherein  $X_3$  represents  $-Y_1-Q_1-Y_2-N(-R_2)-Y_3-Q_4$  or  $-N(-R_2)-Y_3-Q_4$ ,

$R_1$  represents a hydrogen atom, a linear or branched  $C_{1-10}$  alkyl group, a linear or branched  $C_{1-10}$  hydroxyalkyl group, a polyalkylene oxide group, a polypeptide group or a polyester group,

$R_{a2}$ ,  $R_{a3}$ ,  $R_{a4}$ ,  $R_{a5}$  and  $R_{a6}$  each independently represent a hydrogen atom, a linear or branched  $C_{1-6}$  alkyl group, a linear or branched  $C_{2-6}$  alkenyl group, a linear or branched  $C_{2-6}$  alkynyl group, a linear or branched  $C_{1-6}$  alkylcarbonyl group, a linear or branched  $C_{2-6}$  alkenylcarbonyl group, a linear or branched  $C_{2-6}$  alkynylcarbonyl group or  $-SO_2OH$ ,

$Y_1$  represents a single bond,  $-N(-R_3)CO-$ ,  $-N(-R_3)-$ ,  $-CO-$  or  $-CH_2CO-$ ,

$Y_2$  represents a single bond,  $-CON(-R_4)-$  or  $-N(-R_4)-$ ,

$Y_3$  represents a single bond,  $-CO-$  or  $-CH_2CO-$ ,

Q<sub>1</sub> represents a linear or branched C<sub>1-10</sub> alkylene group, a linear or branched C<sub>1-10</sub> hydroxyalkylene group, a polyalkylene oxide group, a polypeptide group or a polyester group,

R<sub>2</sub>, R<sub>3</sub> and R<sub>4</sub> each independently represent a hydrogen atom, a linear or branched C<sub>1-10</sub> alkyl group, a linear or branched C<sub>1-10</sub> hydroxyalkyl group, a polyalkylene oxide group, a polypeptide group or a polyester group,

Q<sub>4</sub> represents a linear or branched C<sub>2-10</sub> alkenyl group, a linear or branched C<sub>2-10</sub> alkynyl group, and the crosslinking agent is a compound having two or more mercapto groups; and

wherein the method is performed so as to crosslink the hyaruronic acid derivative during concentration and drying.

**32. (Previously Presented)** The method according to claim 5, wherein the crosslinked polysaccharide microparticles are injectable.

**33. (Previously Presented)** The method according to claim 5, wherein the drug is a protein.

**34. (Previously Presented)** The method according to claim 6, wherein the sustained release period of the carrier is 24 hours or more.

**35. (Previously Presented)** The method according to claim 6, wherein the sustained release period of the carrier is 5 days or more.

**36. (Previously Presented)** The method according to claim 6, wherein the drug is released upon enzymatic digestion.